

INDIVIDUAL INVENTORY FORM

NHDHR INVENTORY NUMBER: CON0507

Name, Location, Ownership

1. Historic name: Conant School
2. District or area: South End
3. Street and number: 152 South St.
4. City or town: Concord
5. County: Merrimack
6. Current owner: Concord School District

Function or Use

7. Current use(s): elementary school
8. Historic use(s): elementary school

Architectural Information

9. Style/type: Colonial Revival
10. Architect/builder: Wells & Hudson
11. Source: Annual School Reports
12. Construction date: 1928-29
13. Source: Annual School Reports
14. Alterations, with dates: multiple additions: see attached
15. Moved? no ☒ yes ☐ date: _____

Exterior Features

16. Foundation: brick
17. Cladding: brick
18. Roof material: asphalt shingles
19. Chimney material: brick
20. Type of roof: hip
21. Chimney location: north wing
22. Number of stories: 1
23. Entry location: center of facade
24. Windows: 6-light sliders

Replacement? no ☐ yes ☒ date: 1982**Site Features**

25. Setting: residential neighborhood; adjacent to Rundlett Middle School
26. Outbuildings: n/a
27. Landscape features: deep lawn setback; playing field to rear
28. Acreage: 8.79 acres
29. Tax map/parcel: 10E-1-1

**Description** Façade (east elevation) of the original 1929 building

35. Photo #1

36. Date January 2010

37. Direction: W

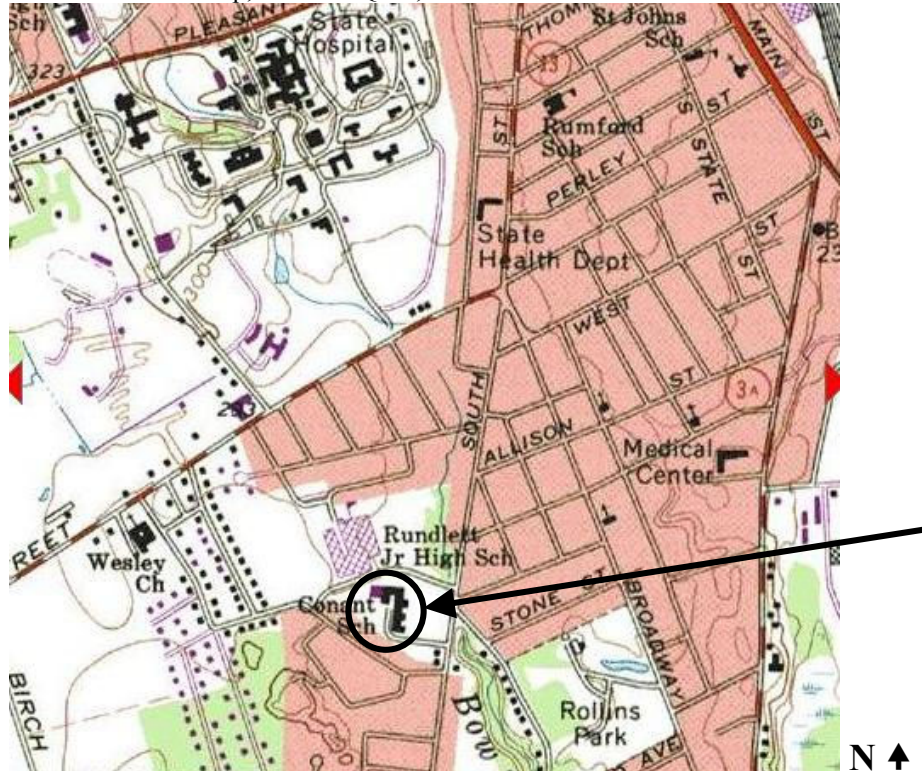
I, Elizabeth Durfee Hengen, confirm that the photos in this inventory form have not been digitally manipulated and that they conform to the standards set forth in the NHDHR Draft Digital Photo Policy (3/1/09-1/31/10). My camera was set to the following minimal specifications: 1496 x 2256/300ppi. These photos were printed at the following commercial printer: Concord Camera.

30. UTM reference: 19.293360/478462031. USGS quadrangle and scale: Concord, 1:24000**Form prepared by**32. Name: Elizabeth Durfee Hengen33. Organization: Preservation Consultant34. Date of survey: January 2010

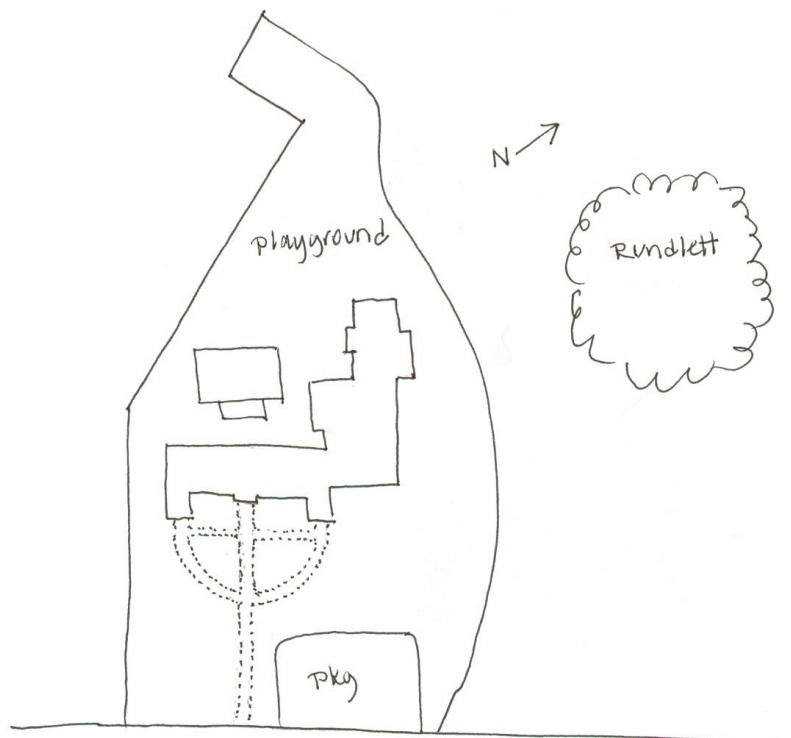
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39. LOCATION MAP: USGS Map, Concord Quad, 1985



40. PROPERTY MAP: (not to scale)



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41. Historical Background and Role in the Town or City's Development:

Conant School was the first school erected in the heart of Concord's South End, a largely 20th century neighborhood roughly bounded by West and Clinton streets on the north; Norwich, Middlebury and South streets on the west, as well as the side streets that stem west from South Street; the Bow town line on the south; and South Main Street on the east. Prior to the construction of Conant School in 1929, students in this area attended one of several smaller elementary schools.¹ Before the 20th century, much of the South End was farms, concentrated along South Street and the other roads that radiate to the south from downtown Concord. After the Boston & Maine Railroad, the city's largest employer at that time, located its railroad shops east of South Main Street in 1895, residential growth in this section of the city exploded, continuing at a rapid pace through the mid-20th century.

Concord's growth at the end of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century compelled a building campaign that included nine new schoolhouses within twenty-five years. Starting in 1890 with Parker School (erected as a high school) and the original Kimball [elementary] School, followed by Cogswell School (1895), Dewey School (1900), Rumford School (1902), Garrison School (1905-06), the existing Kimball School (built to replace Parker School as a high school in 1907), Morrill Manual Training School (erected as a complementary structure for the new high school in 1907), and Walker School (1914). In the 1920s and '30s, a second building campaign saw the erection of yet five more schools, four of which were elementary schools: Dame School (1923) Millville School (1923), the existing Concord High School (1927), Conant School—the subject of this report (1929), and Eastman School (1935). Most of these schools were built to relieve overcrowding at existing schools, although Dewey and Millville were erected to serve the developing West End and Conant the South End. Despite this flurry of construction, many of the new schools were overcrowded within a few years of their opening.

Conant School was first known as the South End Platoon School, and was built as an elementary school specifically to serve the neighborhoods of the South End. At least since 1925, residents of the South End petitioned the School Board to consider a new grade school in their part of the city due to the tremendous growth in population. According to the superintendent, these residents wanted "one good new school building to serve the school needs of this rapidly growing part of the city." However, in 1925, the School Board proposed that although "the congestion below Pleasant Street shows no diminution," the new high school should release enough rooms at "Chandler, Rumford, Cogswell and Penacook schools to accommodate the southern part of the district for a number of years come." Despite this forecast, the School Board began to investigate the area's needs and potential locations for a new school in 1926. The new building, they proscribed, should have twelve rooms and be "so constructed as to be most economically enlarged when necessary, and with a large enough area about it to provide for all recreational facilities for both boys and girls separately."²

¹ The territory at issue included several existing grade schools: Penacook School (a four-room school on the corner of West and State Streets, built 1870, sold to the City of Concord in 1929), Cogswell (a two-room school at the corner of West Street and Broadway, built ca. 1895, sold to the city in 1944 as a site for a new fire station), Dunklee School (on Dunklee Street, sold at public auction in 1929), Iron Works School (on Iron Works Road), Chandler School (on the corner of South and Fayette streets, built 1877-78), and Rumford School (eight rooms, on the block between Monroe and Thorndike Streets, built 1902).

² *Annual Report of the Receipts and Expenditures of the City of Concord*, 1925: 73-74 and 1926: 74. As early as 1904, the superintendent lamented that, "it is now apparent that...the Cogswell building should have been located farther south." The building was less than a decade old at that time (*Annual Report of the Receipts and Expenditures of the City of Concord*, 1904: 90).

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After nearly fifty new homes were erected in this area between ca. 1925 and 1927, offering “impressive evidence of the rapid growth of this section of the city, and the attendant outgrowing of present school facilities,” the School Board conceded in 1927 to build a new school. That year, the District purchased farmland from Frank W. Paige (or Page) on the west side of South Street, south of Pillsbury Street and immediately north of Mr. Paige’s house. It was, the commissioners reported, “a level area, beautifully located, the ravine that separates in part this area from the highway could easily be filled in, leaving an attractive pine growth upon the site that would make it a place unique for beauty and recreation. Mr. Paige will sell to the District an area of eight acres for...\$3,600.” An estimate for the building was based on recommendations of consulting architect Frank L. Cooper, Corporation of Boston.³

But still, the decision to build the school was not yet final, it seems, until the School District meeting in March of 1928, when the Board received a petition signed by more than 200 South End residents signed asking them to consider the Page lot for a new grade school. The School Board voted to investigate it further, noting also that it will “probably be built upon the unit plan to provide for future needs as under this system such a structure could be enlarged from time to time without interfering with the symmetry of the building’s outline.”⁴

The district selected the architectural firm Wells & Hudson, which operated out of Hanover, NH, to prepare plans for its new school. The firm had designed several buildings at Dartmouth College, as well as the public library in Belmont, New Hampshire.⁵

During the several revisions of the architectural drawings, the local newspaper noted the kindergarten moved to the south wing and its former location, “the rear or main portion of the structure [is now] allotted to the physical education room...The auditorium stands as originally planned” save an additional “entrance way at the front which brings the number of entrances to the building to five.”⁶

³ *Annual Report of the Receipts and Expenditures of the City of Concord*, 1926: 75-76; 1927: 64-65.

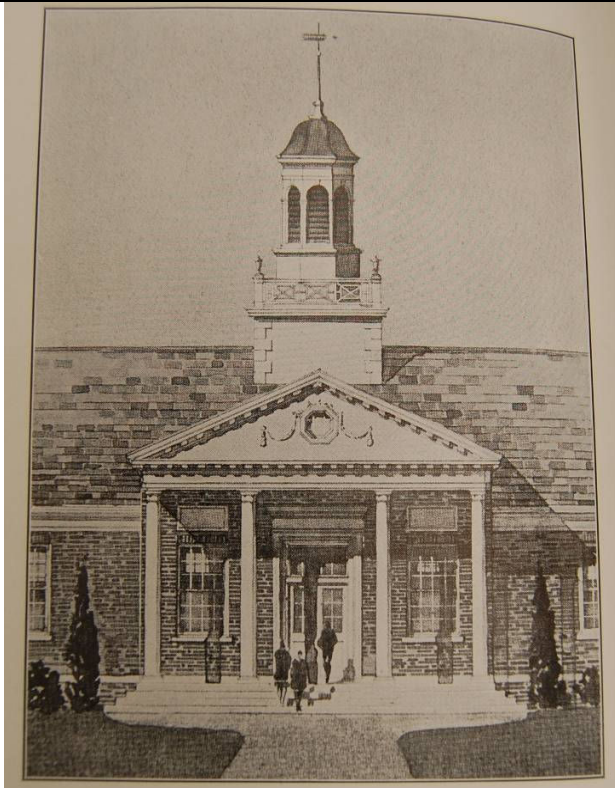
⁴ *Concord Daily Monitor*, March 6, 1928: 1.

⁵ Harry A. Wells was an engineer and served as Dartmouth College’s Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds in the 1910s. He joined with architect Archer E. Hudson from 1926-1932. [*Concord Daily Monitor*, June 18, 1928: 1,5]

⁶ *Concord Daily Monitor* 18 June 1928: 1,5. Since the original plans for the school have not been located, this offers a glimpse at how the school rooms may have been used in the early years.

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A 1928 rendering of the entrance to Conant School. From *Concord Union School District Annual Report*, 1929.

The South End Platoon School, as it was first known, was completed in 1929 for a total cost of \$107,000. The contractor was H. P. Cummings Construction Co., which hired a large amount of local labor. Cummings specialized in buildings such as schools, hospitals and banks, in the 1920s.⁷



Conant School, photographed just after its completion. From *Concord Union School District Annual Report*, 1929.

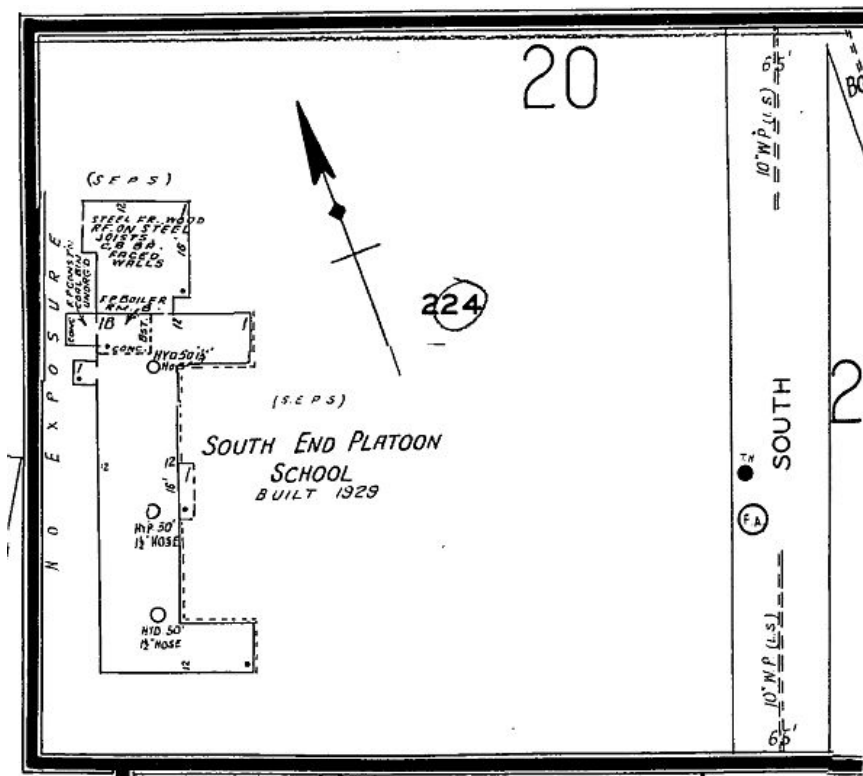
⁷ *Concord Daily Monitor* 18 June 1928: 1,5; *Concord Union School District Annual Reports*, 1929: 8 and 1930: 7, 14; HP Cummings Construction Company website. Cummings Co. still in business, with offices in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, was not able to locate the original plans for the school.

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The School Board deemed the building “practical to the last degree and...architecturally one of which Concord citizens may justly be proud.” It held “eight class rooms, a physical culture room 60x24, a highly modern kindergarten room, principal’s office, teachers’ room, library, dental clinic office and an auditorium that seats 300 people.” It was on eight acres, with “plenty of good air and sunshine.”⁸

The official opening of the school on October 25, 1929, drew 500 people. Some of the features of the building were highlighted, including the “thermostatically controlled heating, no draft windows, rooms on all one floor and brass piping throughout.” The opening night also included an address by the superintendent, Louis Rundlett, offering an explanation of the school’s organizational theory, the Platoon System, which had been considered in the design of the building. The Platoon System was first developed in the early 20th century in Indiana. It called for dividing the student body into two platoons. While one platoon was using the academic classrooms, the second used the auxiliary spaces, such as the laboratories, auditorium, gymnasium, and yard. It was seen as an efficient use of space and time and as beneficial to fostering the whole child. In Concord, the system was adapted and used at Walker School and at Conant by relieving the homeroom teacher of certain subjects and designating other teachers for physical education, music and drawing, and geography and nature study.⁹



Detail from the 1949 Sanborn map of Concord

⁸ Concord Union School District Annual Reports, 1929: 8 and 1930: 7.

⁹ Calumet Regional Archives; Concord Daily Monitor 26 October 1929 [transcribed in Quimby: 4]; Concord Union School District Annual Report, 1929: 33-34.

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The first reference to this building as Conant School appears in school district's annual report of 1936, though no explanation is offered for the name change. The school was named for Charles S. Conant, music teacher and music department director in Concord for thirty-seven years, who died in 1925.¹⁰



Conant School, 1940s. *Collection of Concord Public Library, photo 87-566.*

In 1940, the district considered the overcrowding of nearby Rumford School, also an elementary, and noted that while the Rumford lot would not lend itself to expansion, “Conant is practically new and was designed for future addition, with an oversized heating plant in one end of the building. The Conant School could be doubled in size very easily.” While the population boom leveled out a bit over the following years, overcrowding was again at issue in 1946, and discussions began for “another wing” for Conant School, “as soon as the shortage of building materials eases.” Government wartime regulations limiting construction projects delayed the addition to 1949, even though residences continued to spring up all over the South End.¹¹

Finally, in 1949-1950, an addition to the north end of the school provided four new classrooms and a large utility room that served as cafeteria, play space and auditorium. (Also at this time, the outside woodwork was painted, and the roof was insulated and re-shingled.)¹²

¹⁰ *Concord Union School District Annual Report*, 1926: 12.

¹¹ *Concord Union School District Annual Reports*, 1940: 34; 1946: 25; and 1948: 24.

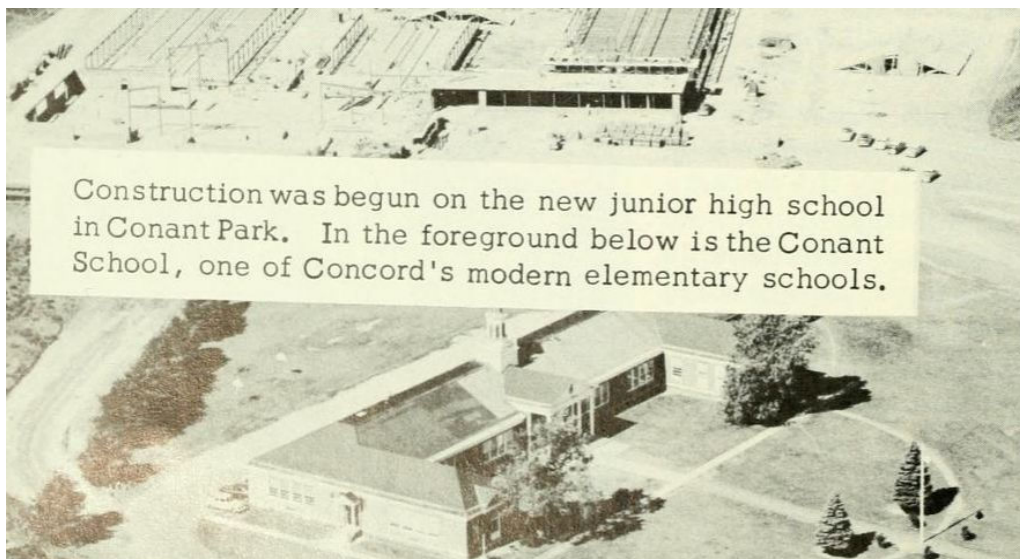
¹² *Concord Union School District Annual Report*, 1950: 35.

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A classroom in the recently completed 1949-50 Conant School addition.
From *Concord Union School District Annual Report*, 1950.



Conant School (bottom), appears in an aerial photograph of Rundlett Middle School (top) under construction. From *Concord Union School District Annual Report*, 1956.

A description of Conant School in 1956-57 notes it had a multipurpose room and a library; fourteen classrooms; and 429 pupils in grades K-6. By 1961 the school board was complaining again that the school was “seriously crowded with an enrollment of 473 pupils in a school with a normal capacity of 350.” The following year, the lunchroom (which was then directly across from the entrance vestibule) was converted into two classrooms, and a new addition provided a multipurpose room, kitchen, two classrooms and bathrooms. The architect was Koehler and Isaak of Manchester, and the contractor was Amoskeag Construction Company of Goffstown.¹³

¹³ *Concord Union School District Annual Report*, 1958: 21; 1961: 12; and 1962: 7.

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Conant School front entrance, 1958. Photograph by William Pinfield.
Collection of the New Hampshire Historical Society

In 1967, Koehler and Isaak designed another addition for the school, which Harper Construction, Inc., completed in early 1968. It added five classrooms, a teachers' room and additional heating plant and storage facilities. Also during this building campaign, the existing administrative office was renovated, a classroom was converted to a library with a carpeted floor, the corridors in the old building were tiled, the front parking lot was enlarged, and an additional playground area was paved.¹⁴

A multipurpose building (freestanding) designed by Bonnette, Page & Stone Corporation of Laconia was built behind Conant in 1985. The building housed a gymnasium, stage, and bathrooms. A small addition on the east side in 1996 provided a music classroom, practice space and a storage room. In 2002, a covered walkway was constructed to connect this building with the 1961-62 addition.

In 1996, the courtyard defined by the original building, the 1949-50 addition and the 1961-62 addition was enclosed to create a library/media center.

¹⁴ *Concord Union School District Annual Report*, 1968: 5-6.

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Bird's-eye view, looking north, of Conant School, ca. 2009. Courtesy <http://www.bing.com/maps>.

42. Applicable NHDHR Historic Contexts:

105. Elementary and secondary education, 1770-present.

43. Architectural Description and Comparative Evaluation:

Conant School is located on the west side of South Street, on a nearly nine-acre lot in the heart of the residential South End. Immediately to the north is Rundlett Middle School, erected in 1957. The school enjoys a deep setback from the street, with lawn (later interrupted by a paved parking lot in the northeast corner of the lot) and curved walkways. The brick building was originally constructed in 1929 and subsequently enlarged with six, one-story, flat-roof additions built in 1949-50, 1961-62, 1967-68, 1985 and 1996.

The original building is a lengthy, one-story, hipped-roof, Colonial Revival structure with east-facing hipped-roof wings at either end. Walls are clad with brick, and trim is cast stone. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The original 12/12 austral wood windows¹⁵ were replaced with metal multi-light, sliding windows in 1982; they are arranged either singly or in groups of four with shared cast-stone lintels.

The main entrance is distinguished by a pedimented portico supported by four Tuscan columns. A flight of concrete steps accesses the portico. Torches and swags ornament the flush-board tympanum, which has an octagonal window in the center and modillion blocks along the cornice. An octagonal lantern with a balustrade, arched, louvered openings, copper-clad bellcast roof and weathervane crests the ridge over the entrance. The Colonial Revival entrance surround is cast stone and features a dentil course and

¹⁵ Austral windows have upper and lower sash that are hinged at top and bottom to pivot in opposite directions. They combined the appearance of the double-hung window with the increased ventilation and ease of operation of the project window and thus were popular, starting in the 1920s, for schools, libraries and other public buildings.

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carved ancons. Cast stone is also employed for ornamental tablets to either side that are filled with carved swags. The double entrance doors are metal, with glass lights in the upper section; they likely date from 1950. Above them is a ten-light transom.

Additional entrances are found in the end walls of each wing, as well as in the middle of side elevations. The former have semi-circular fanlights with replacement muntins and glass, and a single ca. 1950 metal door flanked by sidelights, replacing double wood and glass-paneled doors that spanned the opening. The side elevation entrances have simple pedimented porticoes, transoms and replacement double doors.

The first addition is appended to the north elevation of the north wing, with a deep setback from the facade. Completed in 1950, it is one-story in height and has a flat roof and brick walls. Windows are grouped in wide bays, each containing five sets of sliding sash beneath an infill panel; a cast stone sill extends the width of the bay. (Original sash was 12/12.) The second addition, built in 1961-62, is attached to the west end of the earlier addition and of similar design and materials. The six-light, sliding window sash dates from 1982 (replacing 12/12 sash). The third addition, constructed five years later, extends the building yet further west, while continuing to adhere to the 1950 design approach. Like the other additions, original 12/12 sash is now six-light, sliding windows. The fourth addition is a tall, rectangular block placed directly south of Addition #2. Intended as a multi-purpose building, its brick walls lack openings with the exception of a few doorways. Although it was originally free-standing, a covered walkway built in 2002 now connects it to Addition #2. In 1996, the two final additions were placed on the school: a small, concrete-block addition built for a music room on the east side of Addition #4, and a concrete-block infill structure that serves as the media center and is tucked into the juncture of Additions #1 and #2. Windows in each of these final additions are single-pane, both fixed and sliding.

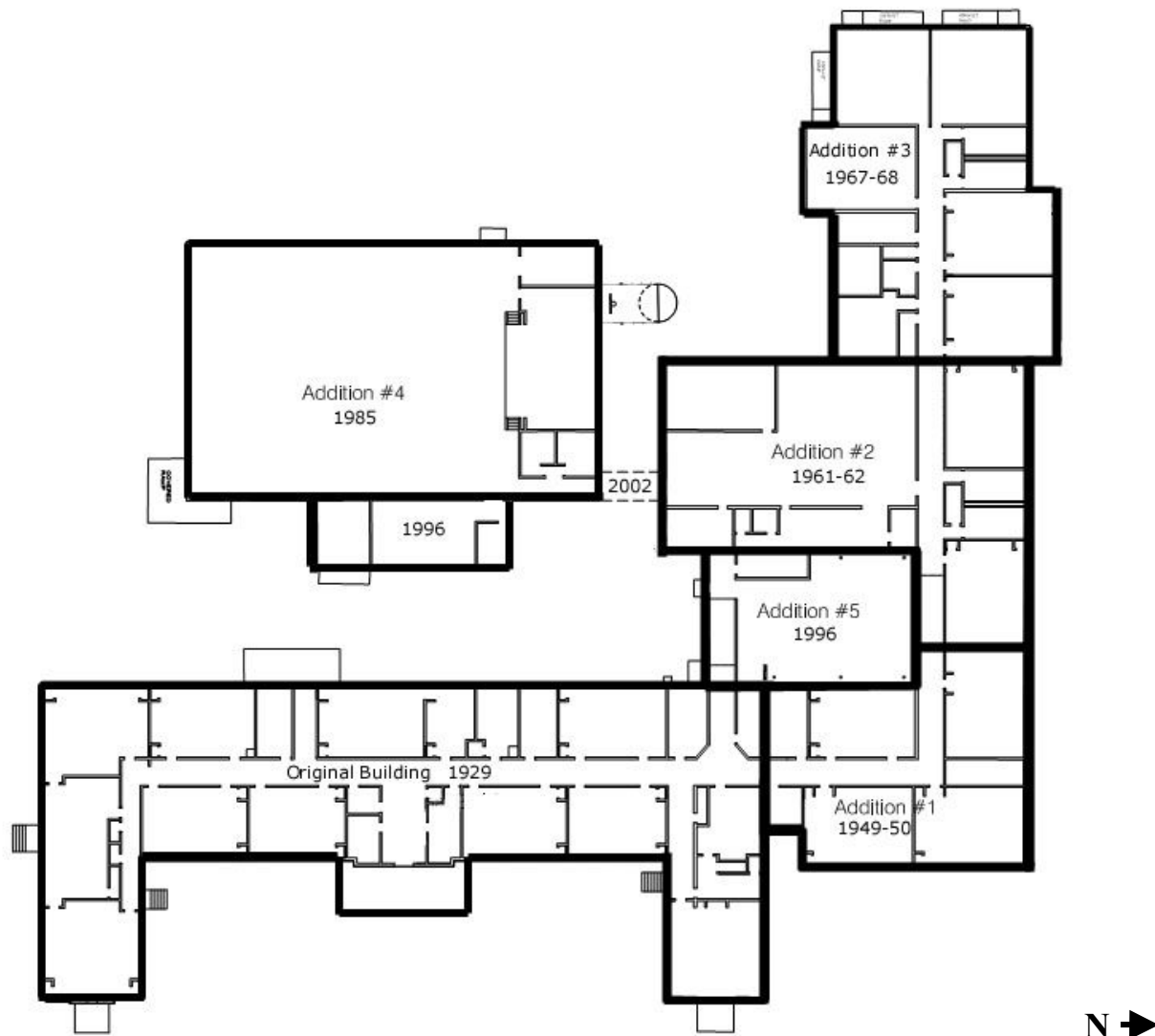
The interior floor plan of Conant School's main (1929) building is nearly unaltered. Finishes in the main (1929) building reflect both the initial construction period, as well as a major renovation in 1949-50, when the first addition was constructed. The entry vestibule has its original transom and sidelights, though the interior set of double doors has been removed. The main corridor, which runs the length of the building on a north-south axis, has a wooden baseboard and chair rail that supports coat hooks. Linoleum tiles installed in 1968 cover the floor. The flush wooden corridor doors in the original building, with their frosted, multi-light panes in the upper portion, most likely date from 1950, though the flat, stained casings appear original. Within the classrooms of the main building, original window casings and sills survive; where windows are grouped, the sill is continuous. Of particular note is a decorative fireplace in the east room of the north wing. It is brick with a wooden surround with a molded cornice with dentils, fluted pilasters on either side, and a fluted center tablet. The south wing, which is the most altered area of the main building, has new partition walls, doors, trim and dropped ceilings.

The interior of the 1949-50 addition was clearly intended to blend almost seamlessly with the original building, as it has much of the same detailing, including fenestration, continuous window sills, chair rail, and baseboards. The doors, which match those in the main building, appear original to the addition.

The 1961-62 and 1967-68 additions have concrete-block interior walls, dropped ceilings, and multi-light and flush doors with recessed metal casings. The original 12/12 wood windows were, as with the rest of the building, replaced with metal windows, in 1982.

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Conant School: current floor plan showing evolution of building.

44. National or State Register Criteria Statement of Significance:

Criterion A: Conant School is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A as an excellent representative example of the five school buildings constructed in Concord in the 1920s and '30s, four of which were elementary schools. The other schools were Dame School (1923), Millville School (1923), Concord High School (1927), and Eastman School (1935). The various additions to the north and rear of the building reflect both rapid growth in the residential South End of Concord and the school district's constantly changing educational needs.

Criterion B: Conant School is not eligible for the National Register under Criterion B, as it lacks direct associations with people that have played a notable role in local or state history.

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Criterion C: Conant School is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C as an excellent representative example of a school building designed in the Colonial Revival style during the 1920s. The original design purposefully allowed for future expansion through additions, and the several additions have successfully respected the architecture of the original building, by leaving its massing nearly intact and by incorporating many of the details into the new spaces. Character-defining features include the 1929 U-shape plan, single-story plan, brick walls, cast stone trim, and Colonial Revival entry portico and lantern. The interior of both the 1929 and 1950 portions of the school retain nearly all of the original floor layout, as well as doors, casings, fireplace, and chair rail.

45. Period of Significance:

A: 1929-1960 (the period during which the school functioned as a school; the end date represents the 50-year cut-off for the Register)

C: 1929 (the year construction was completed)

46. Statement of Integrity:

Despite the loss of historic window sash, Conant School retains integrity of location, design, materials, setting, workmanship, feeling and association. Although numerous, all but one of the additions are to the rear of the original building and do not compromise its design. The one addition that is appended to a primary elevation was erected in 1950, which is during the period of significance.

47. Boundary Discussion:

The eligible boundary is the entire 8.79 acres that are associated with Conant School.

48. Bibliography and/or References:

Calumet Regional Archives, "William A. and Mildred H. Wirt Papers: Historical Sketch," Indiana University Northwest, http://www.iun.edu/~cra/cra_records/cra101.shtml (accessed January 6, 2010).

Concord, City of, *Annual Reports of the Receipts and Expenditures of the City of Concord*.

Concord, City of, *Concord Union School District Annual Reports*, 1925-68.

Concord Daily Monitor, 1887-1929.

"Concord's 150th Anniversary." *The Granite Monthly*, vol. 10, nos. 5 & 6 (1915).

HP Cummings Construction Company, "History," <http://hpcummings.com/interior.php/pid/2> (accessed January 26, 2010).

Mausolf, Lisa, "South End," 2004. Project Area form on file at NH Division of Historical Resources.

Meacham, Scott, *Dartmouth College: An Architectural Tour*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008.

Quimby, Jeanne Bennett, "History of Conant School," 1991. In the Concord Room, Concord Public Library.

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Maps & Plans

Drawings and specifications, 1961, 1967, 1985. On file at SAU Maintenance Office, 29 Pembroke St., Concord, NH.

Sanborn Insurance Maps, 1928, 1949.

Surveyor's Evaluation

NR listed: individual ☐
within district ☐

Integrity: yes ☒
no ☐

NR eligible: ☐
individual ☒
within district ☐
not eligible ☐
more info needed ☐

NR Criteria: A ☒
B ☐
C ☒
D ☐
E ☐

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Address: 152 South Street, Concord, NH Date taken: January 2010 Negative stored at: NHDHR



Photo #2 Description: Portico and front entrance of original (1929) building
Direction: W

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Photo #3 Description: South wing of the 1929 building
Direction: SW



Photo #4 Description: East elevation of the 1929 north wing (at left) and 1950 addition (at right)
Direction: W

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Photo #5 Description: North elevation showing the 1950 (center of photo) and 1967-68 (far right) additions
Direction: SW



Photo #6 Description: Rear elevations of the 1966-67 (far left), 1961-62 (center left) and 1985 (right) additions
Direction: E

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Photo #7 Description: Rear elevations of the 1967-68 addition (left) and the 1961-62 addition (right)
Direction: NE



Photo #8 Description: Front vestibule of original (1929) building
Direction: E

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Photo #9 Description: Hallway in the original 1929 building
Direction: S



Photo #10 Description: 1929 classroom (SW corner)
Direction: S

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Address: 152 South Street, Concord, NH Date taken: January 2010 Negative stored at: NHDHR



Photo #11 Description: Fireplace in the north wing of the 1929 building (former library)
Direction: NW